UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1998/P/L.19
17 November 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1998
26-28 and 30 January 1998
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

FOR INFORMATION

COUNTRY NOTE**

Pakistan

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for Pakistan for a programme of cooperation for the period 1999 to 2003.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. In the 50 years since independence, Pakistan has achieved a fair measure of economic growth, but has so far been unable to secure sustained progress in human development. An industrial base and business activity have developed primarily in urban centres, while traditional economic and social structures persist in many rural areas. Nearly one third of the country's 140 million people live in poverty. While the last decade has witnessed progress in addressing the needs of children, scarce resources, combined with inhibitive socio-cultural practices, do not serve the best interests of children and women. The girl child faces greater risks to survival, is more subject to violence and abuse, and has less access to education, proper nutrition and health services. The low status of children and women is a manifestation of low literacy levels, wide gaps between legislation and enforcement, and limited participation in civil society.

2. One out of three newborns suffers from low birth weight. Although infant mortality has dropped from 137 to 95 per 1,000 live births over the past 30 years, Pakistan's infant and child mortality rates remain high. One in seven children dies before reaching the age of five years; major causes are diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory infections and malaria, compounded by malnutrition.

---

* E/ICEF/1998/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 1998.

Fifty-one per cent of children under five years old are malnourished and a majority suffer from anaemia. While 70 per cent of rural households have access to clean drinking water, only 48 per cent of all households have some means of sanitary human excreta disposal.

3. Limited overall progress has been made towards the goal of universal primary education. An estimated 38 per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys never enrol in the formal primary education system. More than 3.6 million children are in the labour force, many in exploitative and hazardous conditions.

4. Pakistan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996 were major milestones. However, the obligations of society, the State, communities and families to ensure realization of those rights have yet to be widely understood. The Government's Social Action Programme and the National Programme for Primary Health Care and Family Planning include positive and promising initiatives. Donor-supported efforts also aim to strengthen the institutions and public service systems which are responsible for programmes for children and women.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The country programme draws on lessons learned from current and past UNICEF cooperation in Pakistan. The current three-year bridging programme (1996-1998) has broadened UNICEF support for advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building, while continuing modest support to direct service delivery. Developing a rights-based approach to address children's needs has focused on service quality, non-discrimination and community participation. This has revealed the Government's willingness to accommodate innovation and respond to new challenges. However, there is still a need for consensus on how best to incorporate rights, participation and governance in the work of Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Towards this end, capacity-building must relate closely to counterparts' priorities and should expose planners and managers to ground-level realities.

6. The lack of reliable disaggregated data for planning and monitoring remains an obstacle to formulating strategies and setting targets for children. Initiatives in management and geographical information systems and sentinel community surveillance have assisted in involving government agencies, NGOs and communities to generate and use information. As tested in an intensive focus district approach in four locations, direct support to decentralized implementation has been effective in reaching more people. However, the process of linking multiple services at the district level requires good understanding and involvement of relevant ministries and departments.

7. Advocacy for raising awareness of national obligations and commitments towards the rights of children and women is valuable at the policy level, but sustained information and communication are needed for improved implementation. To be effective, legislation must be developed with the involvement of NGOs and experts, reviewed and debated by parliamentarians, enforced by government agencies and monitored by people with adequate knowledge and information. The involvement of donors and the private sector can lead to the mobilization of resources and increased commitment. Community involvement in programme planning, implementation and monitoring shows that most families are willing and able to become active partners in improving their own situation. The involvement of women as community workers, teachers, health and family planning workers, and sanitation promoters can significantly improve coverage and impact.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

8. The programme of cooperation aims at addressing comprehensively the needs of Pakistan's children in which these needs are recognized as rights. Therefore, the programme strategy is based on the two Conventions and has been formulated in line with the Government's evolving 9th Five-Year Plan for 1999-2003 as well as with ongoing and planned human development activities in the country. UNICEF consultations with government, NGO, United Nations agency and bilateral donor partners at national and provincial levels resulted in consensus on priority elements of the programme strategy.

9. The principal focus of the programme is on ensuring the realization of child rights as an obligation of the Government and society as a whole. A rights perspective and approach will be promoted through advocacy, social mobilization and capacity-building of institutions, communities and individuals. Efforts will be made to bridge the gap between legislation, ratification and declarations on the one hand, and actual practice and enforcement on the other.

10. Secondly, a gender perspective will be applied in all aspects of the programme to meet the special needs of the girl child and to achieve equal access to services and address violence against women. The programme will support efforts to increase the number of women working in service delivery, to involve women as agents of change at the community level and to provide them with the information needed to make informed choices.

11. As the third main element, UNICEF will work with partners to improve governance and community participation in the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority. The decentralization of decision-making and accountability will be supported at provincial, district and community levels. Families' and communities' awareness of child rights will be strengthened to enable them to play active roles in identifying and addressing those rights.

12. The programme will focus on specific national goals for the year 2003, including reducing infant and under-five mortality rates to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births, respectively; achieving universal access to and 70 per cent completion of primary education for children aged 5-9 years; reducing the prevalence of low birth weight to 10 per cent and of under weight in children under five years old to 20 per cent; increasing access to a source of potable water within 100 metres in poor urban and rural areas to 100 per cent of the population; and increasing rural sanitation coverage from 32 to 60 per cent of the population. In addition, efforts will contribute to achieving the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation goals of eliminating bonded and hazardous child labour by the year 2000 and all forms of child labour by 2010. UNICEF support will aim at engaging communities in the realization of the rights of children and women and strengthening the dialogue between the Government and civil society. With this strategy and in pursuit of the above-mentioned goals, UNICEF will support the programmes described below.

13. In health and nutrition, the programme will contribute to the target of having at least one lady health worker in every village in Pakistan. In at least eight focus districts, the aim is to attain universal coverage of immunization, use of oral rehydration therapy during diarrhoea episodes and use of adequately iodized salt, and to significantly reduce mortality caused by acute respiratory infections and eliminate severe and moderate malnutrition. Activities to improve women's health, especially their reproductive health, aim to significantly reduce maternal mortality. In selected areas, the target of universal access to safe water supply and environmental sanitation will be supported for child survival and health. This will involve support to institutional, societal and behavioural change. In education, support will be given to community involvement in several focus districts, with the aim of achieving the full participation of girls and working children in primary education. Technical support will be provided to improve the overall quality of teaching to maximize completion and learning.

14. Advocacy and communication support will provide for the review, revision and enforcement of laws that promote and protect the rights of children and women. This will involve building the capacity of NGOs, government agencies, courts, police and communities to monitor violations of rights and raise awareness. A special focus will be on the protection of children from exploitation and hazardous labour, the protection of girls and women from discrimination, and ending violence against women. The planning, monitoring and evaluation component will further strengthen the analysis and use of disaggregated data for planning and monitoring of the situation and programme progress. The measurement of programme impact, in particular at the community level, will guide fine-tuning of the country programme. The focus district component will continue to test ways to support district teams to meet the needs of children and women. It will develop alliances between service providers and the community and involve people in setting priorities for and contributing to their own development. The process will be documented, shared and debated to enable learning and expansion.

15. This strategy has been developed in close cooperation with other agencies. In particular, it incorporates the common programme themes of the agencies of the United Nations Development Group (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF), namely gender equity and good governance. A number of health activities will continue to be coordinated with those supported by the World Health Organization and UNFPA, while elements relating to education, child labour and nutrition will maintain linkages with the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organisation, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, respectively. As in the past, the programme is intended to complement and support the Social Action Programme, which is supported particularly by the Governments of Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, the European Union, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1999-2003 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Child health	8 000	5 000	13 000
Nutrition	7 000	5 000	12 000
Women's health	7 943	5 000	12 943
Safe water and healthy environment	9 000	7 000	16 000
Education	9 500	7 000	16 500
Advocacy and communication	7 500	3 000	10 500
Planning, monitoring and evaluation	5 000	1 000	6 000
Focus district programme	3 000	2 000	5 000
Total	56 943	35 000	91 943

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.